



conneXions

...growing God's family...

Issue 43

123rd General Assembly

Photos from the 123rd General Assembly
of the Presbyterian Church of South Australia
held 25th - 27th May at Port Augusta



Clockwise from top:

The assembly at work. Brian Redpath speaking to the assembly.

The venue: Port Augusta church building.

Members of the 123rd General Assembly.

Robert Benn, Moderator-General of the Presbyterian Church of Australia brought Bible expositions and a report on the recent visit to East Timor.



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

| | |
|---|---|
| From the Pastor's Desk | 2 |
| Elders Care Groups | 3 |
| Before the Throne of God Above | 3 |
| Church Calendar for June | 4 |
| Book Review: Starting Your Family - Steven & Candice Watters | 5 |
| Counterfeit Gospels - Tullian Tchividjian | 5 |
| Mission News | 6 |
| The Posture of Prayer - Tim Challies | |
| God has Called us to be Expositional Listeners- Matthew Perry | 8 |

THIS MONTH'S HIGHLIGHTS

- Monday 1st 7:30pm Board of Management
- Thursday 4th 1.30pm PWA Musical Afternoon
- Sunday 14th 10.00am Lord's Supper
- Monday 22nd 7.30pm Elders' Meeting (Session)

Our Mission Statement

— why do we exist? —

Glorifying God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit by growing His family through Biblical teaching, prayer and loving relationships locally, nationally, and internationally.

Our Vision Statement

— where are we heading? —

As a Gospel driven church we aspire to establish 15 self-replicating growth groups across the church by 2012.



From the Pastor's Desk

Last week I attended the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of South Australia. Another Church has just concluded its Assembly as well, the Church of Scotland (CoS), the one of the Scottish churches from which the Presbyterian Church of Australia (PCA) was founded. Decisions were made at that Assembly which should be of concern to Bible believing Christians.

The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland was called upon to consider an appeal against the action of the Presbytery of Aberdeen to induct into a charge a minister who has openly declared himself to be living in a homosexual relationship.

The General Assembly voted (May 23, 2009) to back Aberdeen Presbytery by 326 votes to 267 (these numbers indicate there were also many abstentions). *The Scotsman* reported the decision was made after four hours of legal and theological arguments and a stirring rendition of the hymn "Spirit of Truth and Grace Come to us in this Place."

The Assembly offered the following explanation for their decision: "The following motion is agreed by the Assembly:

a) refuse the dissent and complaint of Aitken and others and sustain the decision of the Presbytery of Aberdeen on the basis that the Presbytery followed the vacancy procedure correctly in Act VIII 2003.

b) affirm for the avoidance of doubt that this decision does not alter the Church's standards of ministerial conduct.

Part a) means the Presbytery broke no rules of the church in their handling of the matter. I honestly have no idea what part b) means.

The Presbytery are now free to continue.

Many outside the church lauded the decision as progressive. The Equality and Human Rights Commission Scotland said it was "delighted" with the result. Alyson Thomson, head of communications, said: "The Church of Scotland General Assembly has set out

a clear stall – it is a modern church for a modern Scotland. The commission is delighted that the Church has, ... taken an honest look at itself over the issue of sexuality and decided that the values of fairness, equality, dignity and respect are of more worth than those of ignorance and intolerance."

In anticipation of the debate an online petition was organised asking the CoS to support the appeal against the Presbytery of Aberdeen. Over 12,000 people signed it, including over 5,000 members of the CoS itself.

Carl Trueman, a Christian who has worked at theological schools in both Scotland and the US makes the observation that a decision such as this is not the beginning of the end for a biblical church, it is a sign that the end has come and gone. For generations now the CoS has not upheld the teachings of the Scriptures in a clear, unambiguous and unified fashion. The Gospel is no longer clearly and singly maintained. This decision is a sign that they have shipwrecked themselves, it is not a cause of shipwreck.

Others within the CoS from strongly biblical congregations are trying to isolate themselves from the authority of the church and are seeking to relate only to congregations like themselves. Interestingly, some of these congregations are quite willing to state that they remain solely so that they can continue to occupy their buildings and remain in their current locations.

Others are suggesting that disaffected folk from the CoS could form some sort of union with the Free Church of Scotland (FCS) - a smaller Presbyterian denomination that separated from the CoS in the 1800s. The challenge here is that the FCS still sing only biblical Psalms, without musical accompaniment. This proposal does not seem to contain the notion that those joining with the FCS will adopt their practice, but that the FCS will forsake their long held practice. Such an idea seems overly optimistic, to say the least.

What are we to make of such a decision? There are many at MGPC who think of the CoS with great affection. I'm sure that they are distressed and confused by this outcome.

It's not our task to fix Scotland, it's our task to be faithful here.

Our principle of reading the Scriptures must remain secure. To affirm the Bible as the inspired Word of God is to believe that every word in the Bible is there because God caused them to be there. The Bible says what God wants it to say. It does not say anything that He doesn't want it to say.

The church of God has never looked at the society around it and then conformed itself to that society. Rather the church has turned to the Bible and taken our standards from there.

Pastors and church leaders often receive lots of criticism for focusing on what are considered minor matters. The reason that minor matters need attention is that they lead to major matters. The reading principle of the Bible that has been used to introduce pastoral leadership by women is the same reading principle that is used to justify pastoral leadership by homosexuals. This is not to say, and I stress this, that everyone who supports pastoral leadership by women supports pastoral leadership by homosexuals. Its just that they have no reading principle of the Bible from which to oppose it.

This is of concern to the PCA. There are those within it who question the doctrine of inerrancy in the strongest terms and whose aspiration for our denomination is that of a church in tune with and able to communicate the Christian message to people of the 21st Century. Again, I am not saying that these folk would necessarily agree with the situation in Scotland. The problem is that they do not have a way of reading the Bible that gives them solid ground to disagree.

Again, tolerance of homosexuality is not the issue that the church stands or falls on. It is a sign though, among others, that a church has already fallen away from loyalty to the Bible and holds other authorities as supreme. We need to hold to the authority of the Scriptures, the sovereignty of God and our mutual accountability as churches. Thirty-two years ago MGPC took a step of faith as many moved their work and witness from a church they could no longer support as being founded wholly on the Word of God. We have know much blessing since that time. We trust that our believing brethren from afar will know similar blessings in time to come.

Edited from a longer article at:
<http://mgpcpastor.wordpress.com/>

Elders Care Groups

Part of the Session's planning for our leadership and care of MGPC has involved thought about our roles as elders.

We know that for some time now the eldership have not been involved in the primary pastoral care of the congregation in a planned and systematic way.

The Session are sorry that such a situation arose and was allowed to continue for as long as it has.

Now, in addition to other steps that we believe will enhance our church's life, we are attempting to be more purposeful in caring for you all.

To help bring this about we have assigned each elder to a number of members. Those elders will seek to keep track of whether you are worshipping with us each week, find out how you are if you are absent for a time, and, on occasion, meet with you personally.

During these meetings there will opportunity for a reading from the Bible, prayer and for the elder to find out how you are travelling on your Christian walk.

This decision has taken some time to implement, but it is not because we do not care about all of you. As I have shared in the past, many of our elders work long hours in small businesses. I have not wanted to overburden them beyond their capacities and to the detriment of their own lives. But they are all adamant that now is the time to proceed.

They'll be letting you know soon that you are under their care. Pray for them, help them out, ask them to come and see you, and you'll be carrying their workload alongside them.

With appreciation for your partnership in the Gospel,

Gary.

An Early Reminder

The Samaritan's Purse children's Christmas boxes will be due in mid-September.

Please contact any Care & Concern Committee member with any queries.



Before the Throne of God Above

Please pray for:
James Davidson;
Noel Cusack; Jim
Stafford; Pearl Hel-

lyer, Hannah Thompson, Frank Mitchell, Fred Nash, Margaret Ware, Ken Wright; Ina Earl; Mary Jeffrey; Brian & Betty Clayfield; Albert & Perle Harvey, Gladys Jones, Elaine Harfull, Jayne Pritchard, Vi Fraser, Blake Vause, and Emmie Thompson.

Continue to uphold our church mission partners:

- Matthew B, serving in west Asia..
- Cameron & Carmel Mackenzie, Flynn Patrol (SA), Presbyterian Inland Mission.
- School Christian Pastoral Support

Workers: especially Matt Eudy (Yahl Primary School).

- Mission Partners/APWM national office: Bill & Jenny Lutton.

Also intercede for:

- State Government: Premier Mike Rann Kevin; Leader of the Opposition Martin Hamilton-Smith.
- Rory McEwen MLA (Member for Mount Gambier); Patrick Secker MHR (Member for Barker).
- Converge International chaplains: Heather Baker, John Deer and Ian Touzel.
- Mount Gambier Salvation Army (Majors Stephen & Christine Black)

Food, Glorious Food! - Big Morning Tea



The *Big Morning Tea* hosted by Care & Concern and Coffee & Craft raised \$376.50 for cancer research.

Creation and Family Life Weekend

With John Mackay, Creation Research

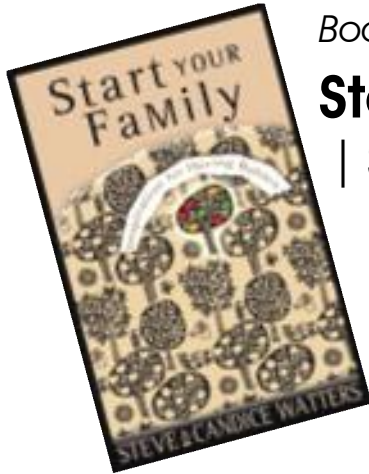


In addition to speaking at a school in the region, an interview on the local ABC radio station and a field trip (pictured above), John Mackay, Inter-

national Director of Creation Research, taught on marriage and the family in the light of the Biblical account of creation.

CHURCH CALENDAR - June 2009

| SUN | MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT |
|---------------------------------|--|--|---|--|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| | 1 7.30pm Board of Management | 2 9am Womens' Bible Study | 3 10am Coffee & Craft | 4 1pm PWA Musical Afternoon 7.30pm Presbytery | 5 10.30am Bible Study | 6 7.00pm Youth Group |
| 7 NE, AL - Ian Touzel | 8 | 9 9am Womens' Bible Study 1.30pm Care & Concern | 10 10am Coffee & Craft | 11 | 12 10.30am Bible Study | 13 7.00pm Youth Group |
| 14 10am Lord's Supper. | 15 | 16 9am Womens' Bible Study | 17 10am Coffee & Craft 7.30pm Ladies Fellowship | 18 | 19 10.30am Bible Study | 20 7.00pm Youth Group |
| 21 NE, AL - Alan Fox | 22 7.30pm Session | 23 9am Womens' Bible Study 1.30 Pleasant Tuesday Afternoon | 24 10am Coffee & Craft | 25 | 26 10.30am Bible Study | 27 7.00pm Youth Group |
| 28 | 29 | 30 9am Womens' Bible Study | | | | |



Book of the Month

Start Your Family

| Steve and Candice Watters

Starting a family is a soul-shaping, world-altering experience. Unfortunately,

in a culture of competing values and protracted timelines, couples are increasingly backing their way into parenting or missing it altogether. By the time the average couple tries to have kids, they are often beyond their late twenties and surprised to learn they're sliding past the

peak of their fertile years. In *Start Your Family*, Steve and Candice Watters encourage couples to be intentional about their timeline in the early years of marriage and to trust God to help them boldly launch their families. Responding to the most common doubts and hurdles, they offer biblical inspiration for the questions, "Why have kids?", "When is the best time to start?", and "How can we fit kids into our lives?"

Tim Challies at challies.com

Available from:
Koorong Books for \$18.95

Counterfeit Gospels | Tullian Tchividjian

In their excellent book *How People Change* Paul Tripp and Tim Lane identify seven counterfeit gospels—"religious" ways we try and "justify" ourselves apart from the Gospel of grace. I found these unbelievably helpful. Which one (or two, or three) of these do you tend to gravitate towards?

Formalism. "I participate in the regular meetings and ministries of the church, so I feel like my life is under control. I'm always in church, but it really has little impact on my heart or on how I live. I may become judgmental and impatient with those who do not have the same commitment as I do."

Legalism. "I live by the rules—rules I create for myself and rules I create for others. I feel good if I can keep my own rules, and I become arrogant and full of contempt when others don't meet the standards I set for them. There is no joy in my life because there is no grace to be celebrated."

Mysticism. "I am engaged in the incessant pursuit of an emotional experience with God. I live for the moments when I feel close to him, and I often struggle with discouragement when I don't feel that way. I may change churches often, too, looking for one that will give me what I'm looking for."

Activism. "I recognize the missional nature of Christianity and am passionately in-

involved in fixing this broken world. But at the end of the day, my life is more of a defense of what's right than a joyful pursuit of Christ."

Biblicism. "I know my Bible inside and out, but I do not let it master me. I have reduced the gospel to a mastery of biblical content and theology, so I am intolerant and critical of those with lesser knowledge."

Therapism. "I talk a lot about the hurting people in our congregation, and how Christ is the only answer for their hurt. Yet even without realizing it, I have made Christ more Therapist than Savior. I view hurt as a greater problem than sin—and I subtly shift my greatest need from my moral failure to my unmet needs."

Social-ism. "The deep fellowship and friendships I find at church have become their own idol. The body of Christ has replaced Christ himself, and the gospel is reduced to a network of fulfilling Christian relationships."



Tullian Tchividjian is senior Pastor of Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church, Fort Lauderdale, Florida, USA.

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Hours:

Monday: 1:30pm - 4:30pm
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1.30 pm – 3.00 pm.

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Ian Touzel

Editorial deadline: 3rd Sunday of the preceding month.

This Church seeks to comply with the Privacy Amendment (Private Sector) Act 2000 at all times. A copy of the Church's Privacy Policy is available on request. If you do not wish to consent to being identified in this or any other Church publication please advise the church office accordingly.

Sunday Services

Mount Gambier, Allison St.
10am—including Sunday School and crèche during school term.

5:30pm—Evening worship

1st and 3rd Sundays:

9:30am (EST)—Nelson

11am —Allendale

5th Sunday

10am—Family Service at Mount Gambier

Mission News local national international

MATT EUDY - CPSW



Yahl Primary School is blessed to have the services of a School Christian Pastoral Support Worker (CPSW) - our very own **Matt Eudy**.

Matt is employed for 10 hours a week (ie Mondays 10.00am - 3.00pm and Thursdays 10.30am - 3.30pm) by the Mount Gambier Schools Ministry Group Inter-church Council through the support and regular donations from this church and the Anglican, Baptist, Catholic, Church of Christ and Uniting churches.

As a CPSW Matt has special skills for working with the students and their families in the Yahl school community:

- ◆ He works in co-operation with the teachers and the Principal to support students
- ◆ is available to students as a listener, supporter and carer;
- ◆ acts as a support, resource and referral person for staff and other staff, as well as families in the school community;
- ◆ works with others in the school and its community to develop services, programs and strategies, that meet the needs of 5 to 13 year old children living in the Yahl area.
- ◆ provides a Christian presence in the school on behalf of the local churches.

Please pray for Matt as he serves Christ and the Yahl Primary School.

Six Months, Three Projects

With the conclusion of the support of the Streams of Living Waters Orphanage, the congregation's World Mission IDEA group have been considering our next season of cross cultural partnership.

An involvement in East Timor is possible, but Gary Ware has informed us that the commencement of any projects there is still about six months away. As a group our conviction is that our partnership projects should emphasize Gospel priorities, as much as possible.

This provides us with an opportunity to be involved in three projects, each of two months duration. Our aim is to provide the level of support which was given to the orphanage (\$150.00 a week, \$1200.00 for each two month term) We have selected these three for particular reasons.

Project 1. (June-July)

is with the Presbyterian Inland Mission Flynn Patrol, which is staffed by Cameron and Carmel McKenzie. This work takes place in outback South Australia, giving Christian ministry and friendship to those who do not personally receive it.



Cameron and Carmel McKenzie - Flynn Patrol, Presbyterian Inland Mission. (Their daughter Jacinta not pictured.)

Project 2. (August-September)

will be with the Darwin Presbyterian Church, which is led by Rob Duncanson. The congregation faces many

unique challenges, but has grown strongly since it was replanted two years ago. In addition, any partnerships we enter into with East Timor will involve Rob, as Darwin is our staging post into East Timor.



Rob Duncanson (right), pastor of Darwin Presbyterian Church. Pictured here with an East Timorese local.

Project 3. (October-November)

Mission Partners/APWM, led by Director Bill Lutton with his wife Jenny. Earlier this year the Associate Director, Phil Simmonds and his wife Glenda left APWM to return to parish ministry. Since then Bill and Jenny have been assisted by a group of volunteers in carrying out a heavy workload. They know of many opportunities to support work but have very limited means to help. Bill has been very generous in supporting our congregation. We would like to bless them by providing this offering toward whatever project they would like to see it go.



Bill and Jenny Lutton, National Director and Office Secretary - Mission Partners/APWM

The Posture of Prayer | Tim Challies

In the past week or two I have been thinking a lot about my times of personal devotion, trying to see where I have allowed them to become just the “same old”—where I may have fallen into bad habits or lazy customs. I have been thinking about what I can do to make these times that will serve to help me grow in godliness while at the same ensuring that they are opportunities to bring worship to God. This is something I find that I need to do on a regular basis. My reflections on prayer coincided with reading 1 Timothy in my times of personal worship. In 1 Timothy we read Paul’s command that “in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling.” This set me to thinking about the posture of prayer. The chapter has quite a few things to say about the content of prayer (e.g. “I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people...”) but it also includes these words about posture, the actions of a person’s body in prayer. I began to think about *how* I pray; not just the words, but also the posture.

Of course we need to affirm that God is far more concerned with the content of our prayers than the posture of our prayers. It is far more important to examine the heart than to examine the feet or the hands. At the same time, there is no doubt that our bodies can be an expression of our hearts (as you see when you shake your fist at the car that cut you off or when you clap your hands at the end of an inspired performance). And so it is useful, I think, to examine what the Bible says about our bodies during prayer.

I turned to Philip Ryken’s excellent commentary on 1 Timothy and found that he highlights several of the ways the Bible tells us to pray. I will summarize them just briefly, hoping that you find it useful, as I have.

Bowing

The Bible, and the Psalms especially, describe bowing during prayer. This is a posture we often use today and one

we teach our children when we tell them to bow their heads (out of respect) and to fold their hands (probably out of respect *and* so they do not fidget!). Psalm 5 says “I will bow down toward your holy temple in the fear of you” while Psalm 95:6 says “Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!” Bowing is a sign of respect and honor. Even today we may bow toward a king or dignitary, expressing in that action our respect for that person.

Kneeling

The Bible mentions several people who knelt during prayer, among them Daniel (Daniel 6:10) and Stephen (Acts 7:60) And of course Jesus himself knelt to pray in the Garden of Gethsemane. He “withdrew from them about a stone’s throw, and knelt down and prayed” (Luke 22:41). Kneeling is a sign of humility and a sign of dependence.

You may find it useful to practice some of these postures in your times of private prayer, allowing that posture to be a reflection of your heart

A person might kneel in the presence of a king or queen and he would do so as a sign of his deference to that person. It is difficult to be proud when kneeling before another. And so kneeling is a very natural posture for the Christian as he prays to the Lord. It seems a very natural position for bringing petitions to God, acknowledging God’s superiority and our utter dependence on him.

Standing

The Bible often mentions people standing to pray in public worship. When Solomon dedicated the temple, he knelt before God to pray while all the people stood (Chronicles 6:3, 13). In the same vein, Jehoshaphat “stood



in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the Lord” ((2 Chronicles 20:5). It became customary for Jewish people to stand for prayer while in their synagogues. Such posture has roots in the Christian faith as well. Ryken shows that Justin Martyr, Origen, Jerome and Augustine all wrote of standing for public prayer. Today we stand in the presence of a judge when he enters his court room. Until recently students would stand when their professor entered the room. And, until recent days, many churches encouraged people to stand during prayer. Standing is, of course, a sign of respect. We stand in the presence of those we respect (or at least as a sign of our respect for their position or their authority). And so standing for prayer is a natural position especially for times of corporate prayer as the people stand in God’s presence out of respect for his authority.

Lying Prostrate

Scripture also mentions people praying flat on the ground with their faces pressed to the earth. Moses fell in the presence of the Lord (Numbers 16:22, 20:6) as did Joshua (Joshua 5:14). Job fell to the ground and worshiped when he was in the depths of his despair. And, of course, the angels and elders who pray before God’s heavenly throne fall on their faces. “And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped

Continued on page 8

Continued from page 7

The Posture of Prayer

God, saying, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen." (Revelation 7:11). This is a sign of utter respect. A man may fall to the ground before another person when that other person has absolute power of life or death. To do so is to acknowledge one's absolute unworthiness and to beg the grace of the other person. And so in prayer laying prostrate is a natural position for those who are overwhelmed either by trouble and woe or by a sense of the glory and majesty of God (or both!).

Hands Raised

And Scripture describes those who raise their hands in prayer. This was the way the priests worshiped in the temple (Psalm 134, 141, etc). And from extra-Scriptural sources we know that raising hands in prayer was customary in the early church. Ryken quotes Tertullian [ca.160 –

ca.220 AD] who said, "We Christians pray for all emperors, etc., looking up to heaven, with our hands stretched out, because guiltless; with our heads uncovered, because we are not ashamed." Early Christian artwork often portrays those who prayed doing so with their hands raised. Such a posture signifies praise. Think today of a rock concert where people may raise their hands toward the stage in what looks almost like an act of praise and worship. And, of course, many Christians raise their hands when they sing, using this as a physical manifestation of their praise. Raising hands is appropriate in prayer especially during times of praising God. Ryken says "This posture is especially appropriate for the minister who leads in public prayer. When he stands in God's presence to offer prayer on behalf of God's people, he may raise his hands to show that the church's prayers are offered to God as a sacrifice of praise."

Nowhere does the Bible command us that we *must* set our bodies in one position or another during prayer. Yet it does describe a variety of positions that each have their own significance. You may find it useful to practice some of these postures in your times of private prayer, allowing that posture to be a reflection of your heart, whether it is a heart overwhelmed with the cares of life, a heart rejoicing in the majesty of God or a heart quieted in humble obedience to God.



Tim Challies, A self-employed web designer, runs the highly regarded blog challies.com, and is editor of Discerning Reader

(www.discerningreader.com), a site dedicated to discerning reviews of books that are of interest to Christians. , he lives in the outskirts of Toronto, Ontario, Canada with his wife and three children. They attend Grace Fellowship Church in Toronto.



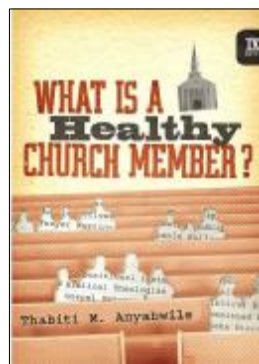
God Has Called Us to be Expositional Listeners

| Matthew Perry

You've heard of expositional preaching, which is taking the main point of a passage of Scripture and making it the main point of a sermon.

But did you know there is such a thing as "expositional listening"? Thabiti Anyabwile, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Grand Cayman in the first chapter of his book, *What is a Healthy Church Member?* says, "Just as the pastor's preaching agenda should be determined by the meaning of Scripture, so too should the Christian's listening agenda be driven by the meaning of Scripture" (page 19). Have you ever thought about this being one of your roles in worship? Why is this so crucial for us to tune in to the Word? Anyabwile continues:

1. This benefits us by cultivating a hunger for God's Word (Psalm 119:103-104).
2. This helps us focus on God's will and to follow Him (John 10:27).
3. This protects the gospel and our lives from corruption (2 Timothy 4:3-4).



4. This encourages faithful pastors (Hebrews 13:17, 1 Timothy 5:17).
5. This benefits the gathered congregation as they strive toward unity.

How do we cultivate this habit?

1. Meditate on the sermon passage during your quiet time the week before.
2. Invest in a good set of commentaries.
3. Talk and pray with friends about the sermon after church.
4. Listen to and act on the sermon throughout the week.
5. Develop the habit of addressing any questions about the text itself.
6. Cultivate humility.

Romans 10:17 says that "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Won't you develop this very helpful habit as you grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18)?

Matthew Perry is pastor of Boone's Creek Baptist Church in Lexington, Kentucky, USA.